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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 004133

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: BEIJING SCHOLAR DESCRIBES SHIFT IN CHINA'S FOREIGN  
POLICY OVER PAST YEAR

REF: A. BEIJING 4107  
[B](#). BEIJING 3976 (NOTAL)  
[C](#). 06 BEIJING 17768

Classified By: Acting Political Internal Unit Chief  
Dan Kritenbrink. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

#### Summary

[1](#). (C) A number of "exceptional" events over the past year demonstrate a subtle shift underway in Chinese foreign policy, according to well-known Beijing academic Jin Canrong (strictly protect). Last year's "unprecedented" Foreign Affairs Work Conference, chaired by President Hu Jintao, highlighted the growing role of domestic actors in China's foreign policy, which is no longer the exclusive domain of professional diplomats. Beijing's affirmative votes on UN Security Council Resolutions targeting Iran and North Korea show that China believes its interests are increasingly aligned with Western, developed countries, particularly in support of free trade and international stability. Finally, the PRC wants to help create, not just follow, international norms, as demonstrated by its support of Margaret Chan's candidacy to head the World Health Organization. A debate over how far to move China's diplomacy away from its traditional passivity is underway, Professor Jin stated, with the leadership selectively fending off pressure for increased activism by using Deng Xiaoping's mantra of "hiding one's talents and biding one's time." End Summary.

#### Rise of Domestic Actors in Foreign Policy

[2](#). (C) In a recent wide-ranging conversation on China's foreign and domestic policies (other topics reported Refs A and B), Professor Jin Canrong, Associate Dean of Renmin University's School of International Relations, outlined several instances of China's "exceptional behavior" over the past year that, he asserted, demonstrate an ongoing shift in Chinese diplomacy. Jin first drew attention to the rising influence of domestic actors in China's foreign policy, as demonstrated by last year's "unprecedented" Foreign Affairs Work Conference (Ref C). The conference, which was chaired by Hu Jintao, used the term "foreign affairs," vice "foreign policy," to highlight the "new faces" influencing China's diplomacy, including provincial political leaders and economic actors, many of whom were present at the conference. Prior to the event, foreign affairs was largely viewed as the exclusive purview of diplomats and foreign policy elites. Now, however, the "Li Keqiangs and Li Yuanchaos" of China (Party Secretaries in Liaoning and Jiangsu Provinces, respectively) have a voice in the formulation of China's foreign policy. The increasing ability of such political and economic leaders to speak out on foreign affairs is an extremely important development, Jin asserted.

## China's "Identity Dilemma"

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¶3. (C) China has been suffering from an "identity dilemma," wavering between identifying with Western, advanced nations on the one hand, and its traditional partners in the Third World on the other, Jin stated. Through its decision on multiple occasions last year to vote affirmatively on U.N. Security Council Resolutions targeting Iran and North Korea, however, Beijing demonstrated that it now believes its interests are increasingly aligned with those of the West, primarily as a result of the PRC's stunning economic growth and concomitant interest in free trade and international stability. In essence, China has decided to join the "advanced club" of nations, rather than always sticking with its "developing brothers," Jin argued. Nevertheless, this decision obviously does not represent a total abandonment of its traditional partners, who are still useful allies on issues such as fending off Western criticism on human rights. Jin acknowledged that former Deputy Secretary Zoellick's "responsible stakeholder" speech had also influenced Beijing's views of its own interests, stating that the speech had an "important psychological impact" on China's leaders.

### Shaping International Norms

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¶4. (C) The final "exceptional" event in China's foreign policy over the past year, according to Jin, was Beijing's decision to aggressively support Margaret Chan's candidacy to head the World Health Organization. Beijing has realized that the international norms that China is pressured to follow are not entirely "neutral." To ensure that PRC interests are protected from any potential harm, Beijing has

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decided it wants to play a key role in creating, not just following, those norms. Jin said supporting Margaret Chan's candidacy was just a first step.

### Center Resists Pressure to Do More

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¶5. (C) A debate over how far to move China's diplomacy away from its traditional passivity is underway among China's elite, Professor Jin claimed. With the growing influence of domestic actors in foreign affairs, as well as China's expanding global interests, the leadership is coming under greater pressure to be more "active" internationally. That pressure comes from a variety of sources, from State-owned enterprises who want help in overseas transactions and protection from foreign competition, to local political leaders who don't want to be "distracted" from their main goal of domestic job creation by foreign pressure on things such as intellectual property rights protection. China's central leadership does not always welcome these new pressures, Jin said, claiming that Premier Wen Jiabao and others selectively fend off the push for a more robust foreign policy by arguing that, at least in certain instances, China should remain loyal to Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy mantra of "hiding one's talents and biding one's time."  
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